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ABSTRACT

Current information on Kansas colleges' high school visitation programs was gathered from high school counselors in 64 Kansas "3-A" schools (enrollment from 124 to 188 in grades 10-12) and 50 Kansas college representatives. A 10-item questionnaire was sent to the high school counselors and a 3-item questionnaire to college directors of admissions; responses were received from 47 high schools (73%) and 37 admissions officers (74%). All data is reported up to March 1, 1984. Total average number of college and other visits to the high schools during the 1983-84 academic year was 21, with a high of 27 and a low of 10. Average graduating class size was 45. Percentage of seniors planning to attend a 4-year school ranged from 63% to 15%; percentage planning to attend a 2-year school ranged from 55% to 8%. Percentage of seniors planning to enter the work force directly after graduation ranged from 51% to 6%. Counselors noted trends away from 4-year programs and toward 2-year and short programs, vocational courses, and schools closer to home, and also reported overwhelming approval of the visits by administrators and students. Counselors offered suggestions for improvement of visitation programs, and college admissions officers offered suggestions for counselors. (MH)

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COLLEGE VISITATION TO SMALL, RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

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April 10, 1984

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"Counselors and College Reps need to work closely together to develop a good working relationship."

COLLEGE VISITATION TO SMALL, RURAL HIGH SCHOOLS

(Perspectives, Data and Trends in "3-A" Kansas High Schools)

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important roles of the High School Counselor in the 1980's is one of advisement with students regarding their future and career planning after graduation. Central to this important role is providing current information to students about two-year and four-year schools within the State of Kansas. There are several ways in which students might obtain this needed information including career days, on-campus visits, by mail or by telephone and through visits by a college representative.

PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this study was to gather current information and data from High School Counselors in Kansas "3-A" schools and from Kansas College Representatives regarding high school visitation. The summary of the data and information from the study highlighted trends in high school visitation programs and suggestions for improvement. Suggestions for further study outlined possible areas for additional study.

The limitations of the study included: Only "3-A" Kansas High Schools were included because these schools are often overlooked in research studies in favor of larger or smaller schools. (enrollment in Kansas 3-A schools ranges from 124 to 188 in grades 10, 11, and 12) It was also decided that to focus on a limited group of schools would provide a sharper picture of trends and direction. A second limitation to the study was that the entire area of military recruitment was not addressed at all.

The role of the military recruiter varies from the role of the college representative and military service carries different connotations for many people from college attendance.

POPULATION

The population for the study consisted of all 64 Class 3-A Kansas High Schools, all 26 public and private 4-year schools, the 19 public two-year colleges, the three private two-year schools, the vocational programs at Pittsburg State University and the Kansas Technical Insitute in Salina. The Kansas Area Vocational/Technical schools were not included in the present study because the singular directions of these schools would lend themselves better to a separate study.

METHODOLOGY

The names of the 3-A Kansas High Schools were obtained from the 1982-83 Membership Directory of the Kansas State High School Activities Association and the names of the schools were obtained from the January, 1984 Issue of the Kansas 4-H Magazine. Questionnaires were addressed to the High School Counselors at each high school and to the Director of Admissions at the colleges and schools.

A ten-item questionnaire was sent to the high school counselors and a three-item questionnaire was sent to the Directors of Admissions. The questionnaires were a combination of objective and subjective questions. Responses were obtained from 47 High Schools (73%) and from 37 Admissions Officers (74%). The questionnaires were returned annonymously to enhance the objectivity of the study and copies of the results were shared with all

respondents to the questionnaires.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes from this study were to provide current data and information on several aspects of the high school visitation process. Further, the resulting summation and suggestions would provide a description of the current status of college visitation in the target population schools as well as guidelines for improving the visitation process and promoting increased cooperation between high schools and colleges.

STATISTICS

Since all schools in the target populations were included in the study, all data was discrete in nature. There was no attempt, therefore, to generalize the data to any other population. However: schools of similar size in other states may find the results of value to them, the general and specific data and comments may be useful to all College Admissions Officers and High School Counselors. Since the data from the study was discrete and no attempt was made at generalization, only descriptive statistices were utilized.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

It is suggested that the study could be replicated with schools of similar size in other states or with larger schools in Kansas or in other states and comparisons could be drawn between the various groups.

"We need better communication between Counselors and College representatives. These visits are very beneficial if properly developed and organized."

INFORMATION FROM THE STUDY

Responses From High School Counselors

The number of college visits to the high schools during the 1983/84 academic year (all data is reported up to, March 1, 1984) ranged from four to 20 with average of 11. Two-year college visits ranged from one to 12 with an average of five. All "other" visits ranged from two to 15 with an average of five. This results in a total average number of visits per school of 21, ranging from a high of 47 to a low of ten.

Plans for the Senior Class of 1984 were reported as follows:

The percentage of students planning to attend four-year schools ranged from a high of 63% to a low of 15% with an average of 36%.

The percentage of students planning to attend a two-year school ranged from a high of 55% to a low of 8% with an average of 20%.

Vocational school's percentages ranged from a high of 35% to a low of 4% with an average percentage of 15 .

Percentage of Seniors planning to enter the work force directly after graduation ranged from a high of 51% to a low of 6% with an average of 24%.

Five percent of the Seniors in the study plan to enter the military service after graduation with figures ranging from 14% to 0.

The number of Seniors (extrapolated) in Kansas 3-A high schools according to the study was 2,880 with an average class size of 45.

Enrollment trends noted by the counselors were: a movemennt away from the traditional four-year programs toward two-year and short programs; a movement toward the vocational courses; and a movement toward attending schools closer to home. The underlying reasons for these demographic trends appeared to be: (1) financial considerations, and (2) a desire by students to "get on the job" as soon as possible with some education and training.

Only two of the high schools responding to the survey conducted their own career days with the majority preferring the regional career days held annually across the State.

The question relating to administrative acceptance of the college visitations resulted in two facts: (1) Administrators approve of the visitation programs and (2) they definitely want all contacts made through the high school counselor and all school rules and regulations followed regarding visitations.

Suggestions from high school counselors for enhancing the effectiveness of college visits included: being flexible and realizing that the high school has to operate with rules and regulations. High school schedules are unpredictible at best and sometimes changes are unavoidable; have the necessary forms and materials on hand for the visit; call in advance of coming; call students in advance so they can plan on seeing the representative; and follow all school rules and regulations.

Admissions counselors are also remined to: not push or pressure students; answer even the most basic questions with courtesy; conduct yourself as though you have a purpose for your visit and that you are not just stopping through on your

way to larger schools; don't take "area high schools" for granted; be enthusiastic about your visit; dress presentably; sell yourself first, then your school; know about your school and the various programs; be honest and accurate, especially with information about costs, financial aid and programs offered; update your lists of students regularly; be willing to spend time with undergraduates as well as Seniors; and stay within the alloted time frame for visitations.

Other suggestions included:

> Keep counselors informed as to the student's progress through college or school.
>
> High schools want visits by the large state schools more regularly.
>
> The longer admissions personnel are on the job the more confidence high school counselors have in them, their abilities and their ability to guide students.
>
> Coaches who also serve as admissions counselors are urged to "be admissions counselors FIRST!
>
> Care must be taken when contacting students and parents at home.

Overwhelmingly, high school counselors in Kansas 3-A schools are enthusiastic and positive about college visits. They like receiving new information about the schools and their programs. They also like help in arranging on-campus visits for students.

Without exception, the high school counselors in the study felt that their students were appreciative and interested in the college visits. A small number of students used the

occasion to get out of class.

The study reported that 35% of the high schools allow three days of released time from school to visit schools and colleges; 51% allow two days and 14% allow any number of days as long as the parents approve.

Responses From College Admissions Officers

> "Our relationship with high school counselors has been excellent. Without exception they treat us well and we do our best to be professional with each student."

The goals and objectives of the high school visitation program as stated by admissions officers included:

To offer students a variety of options in Kansas higher education.

State colleges expressed an interest in contacting high schools because they receive tax money for their operation and have an obligation to do so.

To help students with the very important and complex decision-making career process.

To provide individual and group contact for guidance and informational purposes.

To learn more about the schools, students and programs being offered at the high school level.

To arrange campus visits for interested students.

To provide the high school counselor with updated information on the school and specific programs.

Counselors should make more use of computerized programs to help high school students with career planning.

Admissions counselors indicated that they liked to work through the Counselor's Office for all planning; they liked counselors to be open and honest with them and with students and to present each school objectively to their students; they would like to schedule visits during class time rather

than during activity period or over lunch break; they prefer a private room for visits; and they want the high school counselors to publicize their visits to all students. There was a wide difference in the number of times a school planned visits to high schools. Some planned several visits to area high schools, some did not visit unless there was an interest and some schools alternated visits to various parts of the State. Some schools indicated a willingness to talk to any interested student while others wanted to see only Seniors who had expressed an interest in their school. All respondents to the survey disassociated themselves from any attempt at "pressure" or "hard sell" tactics. College representatives did not like to be limited either in time or days for their visits; several expressed that the high schools should fit into the most economical travel schedule for the representative; and several stated that they liked to have the high school counselor sit in on the individual and group conferences. Some schools expressed a desire to meet with classes and groups as well as individuals while others wanted to see only individual students.Some representatives mentioned that they did not feel they had been adequately informed of the high school rules and regulations pertaining to visitation. Most all of the representatives encouraged high school counselors to stress attendance at the regional career planning conferences.

> "As the pool of high school Seniors declines, we (the college representatives) become more and more 'marketing' oriented rather than 'guidance' oriented."

The college and school representatives saw the high school

counselor as a key to the success or failure of the visitation program. Other comments by the school representatives included:

The high school visit is crucial to the small college or professional school.

Some high schools seem to be overprotective of their students and seek to "screen" which students are called to see a representative.

High schools should allow as many visits as a student wants to schools and colleges.

> "The success of any high school visitation is dependent upon the attitude of the high school counselor."

Some representatives suggested that high school counselors should "screen" students and see that only those interested in a school be called to see them while others suggested that "high school counselors should 'discourage' visits from schools 'a long distance away." Unanimously, the representatives realized that the high school counselors are under pressure not to disrupt the academic day and, at the same time, provide contact for students with schools of their interest and choice.

SUMMARY

> "We need better communication between the high school counselors and the representatives. Visits can be most beneficial if properly organized."

The study sought to determine current data, trends and attitudes regarding selected aspects of high school visits by college admissions counselors in Kansas "3-A" high schools with enrollments in grades 10, 11 and 12 between 124 and 188. No vocational or proprietary schools were included in the stud nor were any military recruitments considered.

All Kansas 3-A High Schools and all two-year and four-year colleges in Kansas were included in the study. A ten item questionnaire was sent to each 3-A High School Counselor and a three item questionnaire was sent to each Director of Admissions. High school counselors returned 73% of the questionnaires and the College Admissions Officers returned 74%. The questionnaires were a combination of objective and subjective questions.

Results of the study indicate that each high school averaged 21 visits by representatives during the 1983/84 academic year. The study further indicated that of the 2,880 high school seniors enrolled in the 64 high schools surveyed: 36% plan to attend a four-year college after graduation; 20% plan to attend a two-year college; 15% plan to attend a vocational school; 24% plan to enter the work force directly; and five percent plan to enter the military service. The average size of the graduating class was 45.

High school counselors reported career planning trends as: shifting toward two-year or shorter programs and away from the traditional four year programs; a movement toward more "practical" and "hands-on" types of programs rather than the liberal arts; and a movement toward schools "closer to home." High school counselors also reported overwhelming approval of the visits by administrators and students. Among their suggestions for improvement of the visitation programs were: more knowledge on financial aid, costs and specific programs of the schools; athletic recruiters having a broader knowledge of the total school curriculum; college representatives being willing to talk to underclassmen as well as Seniors; greater care taken

in home visits; working through the counselor on all contacts; not take the small schools "for granted;" and to keep the counselors informed on the progress of their students in college. The high schools also wanted more visits from the larger state schools. The study indicated that 35% of the 3-A High Schools allow three days released time for Seniors to visit colleges; 51% allow two days and 14% allow any number of days with parent permission.

College admisssion counselors cited a major problemin high school visitation with scheduling days and times to see students and the unsuitability of the places they had to use for visitation. Some high schools are reluctant to take students out of class for conferences and meetings sometimes had to be held in hallways or in lunchrooms.

College admissions officers felt quite strongly that taking students out of class was a necessary factor in the career decision-making process. They also encouraged all counselors to urge each Senior to attend the Career Planning Days held annually across the State. The college representatives see their role as being both informational and guidance-oriented for the student and the high school counselor.

Both the high school counselors and the college admissions officers agree that there is a unique relationship between these groups and closer communication is needed to enhance the high school visitation process.

A SUGGESTION

Because of the unique and very important relationship between the high school counselor and the college admissions officer, it is suggested that the State Organizations of the

respective groups, KCAD and KACRO, meet at the committee level to develop an agreed upon set of goals, objectives and procedures for high school visitation. The resulting document would be a practical blending of the goals, objectives and needs of each group and of the high school student for the mutual benefit of each person concerned.

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April 10, 1984